

Spencerport priest to answer sexual abuse charge

MARKETTA GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

A Spencerport priest accused of sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child is scheduled to make his first court appearance at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday in Rochester City Court.

The Rev. Dennis Seward, 54, will be arraigned on charges of third-degree sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a

child, both misdemeanors. The charges stem from an alleged incident when Seward was pastor of Church of the Annunciation in northeast Rochester, where he was pastor from 1999 to 2001.



Seward

No other details about the case or the accusation against Seward were available Monday.

He most recently was pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport. He had also served at St. Helen Church in Gates, Church of the Assumption in Fairport, St. James Church in Irondequoit and St. Mary Church in Waterloo. Plus, he taught at Good Shepherd Catholic School

in Henrietta.

Seward had been on sabbatical since January, but it was unrelated to any allegations, said Michael Tedesco, a spokesman for the diocese. Sabbaticals are routine, and any priest can apply to take one after seven years of service. They usually last three to five months and must incorporate vacation, retreat and education. Seward's sabbatical included time spent

at a university in England.

He was on sabbatical when the diocese first learned about the allegations in late April.

"As soon as we received information that caused us concern, we shared it with the Rochester Police Department and let them conduct a thorough investigation," Tedesco said.

Seward remained on sabbatical, with full rights as a priest, until June, when he

was placed on administrative leave.

During his sabbatical, "He wasn't in a position of parish ministry and we thought it was important to let the police department complete their investigation," Tedesco said.

Under the terms of the administrative leave, Seward cannot engage in any public ministry or live in diocesan housing. □

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